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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONFERENCE IN WICHITA FOCUSES ON CHILDREN AND CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

WICHITA, Kan. – Child pornography cases make the news all too often these days. But after the arrest warrants are served and the hard drives are confiscated, who asks if there were children in the offender's household? Who makes sure they're OK?

That's the kind of question more than 300 law enforcement officers, social workers and mental health professionals will tackle during a two-day conference in Wichita Tuesday and Wednesday titled "Protect Our Children: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Child Pornography Investigations."

United States Attorney Eric Melgren will moderate a panel discussion including experts from the U.S. Attorney's office, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Sedgwick County District Attorney's office and the Wichita Police Department.

"I am pleased that we have formed a partnership with the Regional Community Policing Institute, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Kansas Social and Rehabilitation Services to bring attention to the child victims that too often fall prey to online predators and pedophiles," Melgren said. "Working together, with the well being of the children in mind, we can more effectively address this very serious problem."

The conference, which runs 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday at the Wichita Airport Hilton, brings together hundreds of professionals in law enforcement and human services who deal with children who have come in contact with sexual predators.

The goal of the conference is to help participants learn how to take a team approach. Cooperation between law enforcement officers and human services agencies in programs such as Wichita's Exploited and Missing Child Unit are a big step in helping keep children safe, said Steven Nevil, Law Enforcement Coordinator with the U.S. Attorney's Office.

“You’ve got a cop and a social worker in the same car. They’re sharing information,” he said.

Sessions will include:

- An in-depth study of the pedophile, by retired FBI Special Agent Ken Lanning.
- Interviewing child victims by Martha Finnegan, an FBI child interview specialist.
- Investigative techniques and case studies with the EMCU’s Detective Bill Riddle.
- Internet stalking and “cybercrime” investigations by Detective Jennifer Wright of the Wichita Police Department.
- Developing effective partnerships with law enforcement by Michelle Bargdill of the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services.
- Taking a teamwork approach with Marcia Stone of Child Protective Services in Austin, Texas, and Lt. Troy Gaye of the Austin Police Department.

“The training is being offered free charge as part of my commitment to do my very best as the United States Attorney to make sure that not even one child predator slips through the cracks of our criminal justice system,” Melgren said. “Child pornography cases are a priority of my office and my hope is that, through this conference, we will all become more skilled in fighting this battle on behalf of those children who are not able to fight for themselves.”

Though the conference is aimed at professionals and not the general public, media representatives are welcome to attend to gather information for stories that would help raise public awareness of child pornography crimes and the efforts law enforcement officers and human services professionals are making to deal with the threat. For more information, contact Jim Cross, public affairs officer, at 269-6481.